

## Enthusiasm sprouts 'growth' at AFRL site

by Michelle Zuck, Information directorate

ROME, N.Y. — A new tradition is growing at the Multimedia Branch building at the Air Force Research Laboratory Rome Research Site here — gardening.

The branch obtained a new plot of soil in front of its building last year as part of renovations at the former Griffiss Air Force Base. Original plans called for a simple buffer zone of shrubs between the building and adjacent parking lot.

However, Michele Melita, chief of the directorate's multimedia center, envisioned greater potential for the new turf, spawned by an instructional video, "Managing Independent Work Teams," presented by the National Technological University under sponsorship of the Rome Research Site Training Office.

Michael Bamberger of the directorate's Civil Engineering Branch was enlisted to help the team with horticultural advice, as well as top soil, peat moss, winter mulch fertilizer, composted soil and "soaker" hoses. An exterior water spigot was installed by John Angulli of the Operations and Support division.

Prior to the planting, a raffle was held to determine the winners of the eight small plots of land. It added a bit of excitement and surprise to the event that became known as "The Great Multimedia Land Rush."

Some raffle winners elected to do flower gardens, while other added beds of rocks and man-made ponds to enhance their gardens. Some chose to grow a vegetable garden. In the gardens are irises, sunflowers, pumpkins, wild roses, lamb's ears, pea plants and hot peppers, to name a few.

"This project has created an excellent environment in which the employees have a chance to work together and exchange their knowledge about gardening," Melita said. "It's been a great success. I'm delighted to have been able to put the training I have received into action."

She added that the experience has improved teamwork, which has carried over to the work place.



**LET IT GROW, LET IT GROW, LET IT GROW** — The Multimedia Branch at AFRL's Rome Research Site obtained a new soil plot following renovations last year and winners of a raffle held at the site have transformed eight small plots into flower and vegetable gardens. Irises, sunflowers, pumpkins, wild roses, pea plants and hot peppers can all be found in the gardens.

"It is very relaxing," volunteer Crystal DeCarolus said. "The gardening work helps relieve the stresses of the day, and this year the gardens have become bigger and better."

The approach to enhancing individual plots was as varied as the background of the volunteers.

"I've always enjoyed a garden at home," said William Watson, a home gardener for more than 30 years. "My wife is a landscape designer and it has become a lifelong hobby for me. This garden has enabled me to do some experimentation with new techniques."

Michael Beaudette chose a vegetable garden because "every one else had a flower garden and I wanted something a little different." He also added to his garden some special fertilizer that he composted.

Howard Brown, a novice in horticultural ventures, chose to plant a single burning bush on his plot.

Terry Cox and Lori Schultz were the remaining raffle

winners, joining the other Multimedia Branch personnel in volunteering their time, energy and money to better the appearance of their workplace.

The self-help program is now in its second year and gardeners have added shrubs and perennials to their collection of summer flowers and vegetables. The project has been

greeted with such enthusiasm that it is expected to continue for many years.

*(EDITOR'S NOTE: Michelle Zuck is a summer intern in the AFRL Information directorate's Civil Engineering branch.) @*